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## ► To cite this version:

Jacques Migozzi. A cultural new deal: the expansion of a common market for fiction in early European media culture (1840-1940).. 2012. hal-00764631

**HAL Id: hal-00764631**

**<https://hal-unilim.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-00764631>**

Preprint submitted on 13 Dec 2012

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## **A cultural new deal: the expansion of a common market for fiction in early European media culture (1840-1940).**

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In the hundred years between 1830 and 1930, Europe underwent radical change, and entered modernity. This decisive transformation did not occur only in the fields of politics and economics, technology and society, but also in the realm of culture. Multimedia and mass culture emerged and expanded, crossing linguistic and national boundaries and overturning cultural practices, sparking the imagination of countless individuals, providing new icons for the collective imagination, and precipitating the advent of a new European identity—or set of identities. From the craze for serialised novels in the 1840' to the international success of the super-productions in silent cinema during the 1920s", popular fictions never stopped circulating. They made their way from one country to another, from one continent to another, from print to celluloid.

In the framework of an international project (2008-2010) funded by the European Culture Office and titled "EPOP: Popular Roots of European Culture through Films, Comics and Serialized Literature," as chief project of Limoges team I studied the history and the main aspects of this cultural new deal, which implied the birth of a new popular culture that cuts across all the media, and whose first occurrences appeared in the 1840s.

Without any doubt, popular fictions must be so considered as transnational trailblazers because they gave rise to wide and permanent cultural transfers and mixing of representations, unconstrained by national borders. Favoured by the economic goals of cultural industries, always looking for new audiences, translating and adapting successful novels, mass fiction turned out to be cosmopolitan. I will support this thesis referring to a panel of examples, but previously I think it's necessary to remind in its broad outlines the cultural new deal that overcame from the middle of the XIXth century to the eve of the World War 2, especially because it's one of the main acquired knowledge by the last two decades of research in publishing history and cinema history, which allowed us to mark the birth of massmedia culture not in the post WW2 "TV age", as it was currently admitted, but in the early "paper age" – according to the title of Felix Vallotton's famous sketch in 1898.

### **1) A cultural new deal:**

#### **1.1 Mediatic culture and the emergence of the mass public**

Beginning in the 1830s, within the general context of the capitalist industrial revolution, the so-called "cultural industries" start coming up. Handling cultural goods as merchandise and trying to earn profit from their production and serial distribution by means of standardised processes, they give rise to an exponential increase of mass market fiction from the middle of the nineteenth century up to the present, insinuating themselves in people's daily life and in the public space. The first mass media

productions were paper based, and sold as periodicals (daily newspapers and large-run magazines) or books (cheap novels, school texts). Then new industries enlarge the realm of fiction beyond printing and publishing early in the twentieth century, using first the new potential for visualisation and the seductive power of image-based media then sound reproduction techniques.

Beginning in about 1840, France and Great Britain opened the way for large-scale publishing companies that would devote their resources to mass production and distribution in order to appeal to a new readership, not very literate but had eager for news and entertainment. Introducing the “age of mechanical reproduction” (in the famous phrase of Walter Benjamin), cultural industries made consequently the physical media into a kind of poetic matrix, generating new narrative forms and genres, dominated by the aesthetics of episodic treatment. In just a few decades, to be sure at different rhythms in different parts of the European continent, the ancient civilisation of orality and local communities was being swept away by this industrial mediatic culture

## **1.2 1840-1940 : from printing to cinema, or the relay between Gutenberg's galaxy and Edison's galaxy.**

This movement of cultural industrialisation picked up steam during the 1840s with the stunning success of the serialised novel. These plot-driven, expressionist fictions generated so much public excitement that they earned a place in newspapers as a major tool for boosting circulation. The example spread, and gradually conquered Spain and Italy, first through translations (Dumas, Féval, Ponson du Terrail, and others) and then through the creation of a national production network. English “penny Sundays” built their weekly success on the episode principle, which provided immense opportunities for an author such as Dickens. *Folhetos* of the literature *de cordel* in Spain, sold in the street, stylised adaptations of the steamy intrigues of serial novels This foundational period even saw the start of transmedial circulation: with the aid of special writing techniques Alexandre Dumas adapted his own episodic historical novels for the theatre, and *Le Bossu* by Féval (1857) was adapted for the French stage in 1862, then triumphing twice in the next year as a dramatic play (translated from the just mentioned French one) and as an original opera in London.

From 1860 to the end of the century mass printing expanded and conquered the general public, riding on the wave of advances in public education and technical progress in printing and the reproduction of illustrations. On one side, school books were in many countries a sort of beginning for a library of the people (Mollier, 2001), like *Pinocchio* (Italy), which became an international favourite. At the same time religious and secular networks competed to offer people “good books” that were part of approved collections and accepted by libraries that monitored the moral rectitude of the books on their shelves (Artiaga, 2007). On another side, the general public, often resistant to such attempts at providing guidance and edification, did respond to the mass circulation press. Pulp fiction offered people their daily ration of excitement, horror or suspense, the fascination of miscellaneous items, the interest of police procedure, and slaked people's thirst for sensation and melodrama, which at the time was fuelling the popularity of “victim novels”.

But a new medium, still in its infancy since the first public projection by the Lumière brothers in 1895, appeared after 1910 as a rising new force in the cultural

landscape. The seventh art began to attract the public, and drew effectively upon scenarios from the most popular novels of the day. A cohort of European criminal heroes, from Fantômas to Arsène Lupin, opened the cinematographic chase, by the side of detective Nick Carter, brought to the screen by Victorien Jasset from 1908. This was before the Hollywood dream machine propelled into stardom, through the silent films of the 1920s, the characters of d'Artagnan, Robin Hood or Zorro, played by Douglas Fairbanks, and before the 1930s saw appearances of Sabatini 's Captain Blood or again Robin Hood, played by Errol Flynn, talking now.

### **1.3 Birth of a culture that cuts across all media**

Under the combined influence first of fiction books, and then of their graphic and moving counterparts, the European imagination underwent therefore an irreversible transformation in the ninety years from 1840 to 1930. In the wake of the industrial and technological revolution, and in synergy with the rise of political democracy, a trans-mediatic culture emerged indeed. Popular culture, in its multimedial expansion, satisfied all tastes by inventing a host of new genres as well as new mutations of old ones: police story, sword and buckler, colonial adventure, science fiction, Westerns, horror, sentimental fiction, urban suspense ... By the same impulse, the transmedial circulation of narratives– gave form to modern mythologies, become familiars icons of our shared imaginary : they may be named as Sherlock Holmes, Dracula, Fantômas, Arsène Lupin, Maciste, Allan Quatermain, Captain Nemo, Winnetou, Oliver Twist... or erected as generic prototypes as the pirate, the detective, the swashbuckler, the “femme fatale”...

## **2 Popular fictions as transnational trailblazers**

In its seductive diversity this “ready-to-dream” type of fiction would play an important role as a cultural and social link within the European space. It provoked an assortment of representations and a nomadic drift of narratives, unconstrained by national borders. Mass fiction turned out to be cosmopolitan, and to be favoured by the economic ambitions of cultural industries, always on the lookout for new audiences, translating and adapting successful novels.

### **2.1 The cross cultural power of translation**

To give a glance to the beginning of our period, the stars of the popular French novel, as established by the sales of serialised novels in the period 1840-50 (Alexandre Dumas, Paul Féval, Ponson du Terrail), all found themselves quickly and prolifically translated and published in Spain and Portugal, and sometimes on others countries. For instance, here is a map, conceived in the frame of a workshop organized in May 2011 in Limoges, that shows the speed of translation for one of Féval's most famous novels *The Hunch-backed* ( 1857).

As you can see, by the way of almost simultaneous translations, the text have circulated far from francophone territories. But this phenomenon of wide spreading diffusion by numerous translations reaches to the sensational when we try to take a census of the European issues of Alexandre Dumas 's *Three Musketeers*

Without any doubt, Alexandre the Magnificent have conquered the whole Europe with his dashing d'Artagnan : in only a few years, *Les Trois Mousquetaires* (1844) was translated into Spanish, English, Dutch, Swedish, Danish, Italian, Czech, Portuguese ... and the second volume of the Musketers ' trilogy *Vingt ans après* (*Twenty years after*) ( 1845) confirmed this tremendous international success

Considering the number of translated editions all along nearly a century, the paneuropean infatuation for Dumas ' masterpiece is really obvious, including Great Britain that dedicated to it no less than 7 different translations between 1846 and 1903.

Fifty years later, with the same seductive figure of the swashbuckler, Baroness Orczy ' *Scarlet Pimpernel* (1903 for the play, 1905 for the first novel) knew a similar expansion, especially in Northern Europe.

It's precisely at this very beginning of the twentieth century that great entrepreneurs began to produce and distribute fiction on a truly international level. The German Eichler can be without any doubt considered as an archetype of this kind for he worked as a multilingual publisher for serials appearing in German, Dutch, French, Flemish, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, often adapted from American original dime novels, like *Nick Carter* and *Buffalo Bill* series, whose rights he had bought from their American publisher Street & Smith. The works were known variously as *romans en fascicules* in France, *Groschenhefte* in Germany, *penny dreadful* in the UK and *fascicoli* in Italy, and they were sold in vast numbers, often measuring in the hundred of thousands, at a low price in kiosks, tobacconists and railway stalls. The inspiring model and publishing formula were truly American, but Eichler as well as his competitors invented more over entirely new series of their own with american heros, promised to European glory, such as Sitting Bull , Texas Jack, or Nat Pinkerton.

## **2.2 Translating and cloning**

Acting successfully as international trade companies for a "literary common market" (Franco Moretti, 2000), the major publishers of serialized fictions imported and exported therefore authors, works and characters . Their inventivity lead them to enhance the soft power of translation by cloning famous heros. I would underline two emblematic cases of this usual process of metamorphosis, but to be brief according to my allowed time, Sherlock Holmes' metamorphosis will the only one I am going to focuse on and I keep apart for a printed version the study of the mutations from Raffles to Lord Lister, two smart gentlemen- thieves.

The English Master of investigation, appeared in 1887 in *A Study in Scarlet*, crossed soon the Channel and had his adventures reprinted in a number of countries of European continent. He was so successful, with more than 80 movies featuring his character during the silent period alone, that noticeable imitations were created, with even more obvious names, such as Sherlock Ohms, Shamrock Jolnes, Ollock Combs...The Publisher of the original stories had even more reason to protest when some competitors simply stole the very name of the British detective.

From these magazines emerged in their turn two famous imitations. The first was the Italian Giuseppe Petrosino who replaced Sherlock Holmes in the Italian version of the German apocryphal Sherlock Holmes series published in Italy by Eichler's local branch under the title *Giuseppe Petrosino, il Sherlock Holmes d'Italia*. Petrosino was a famous Italian-American policeman who was killed by the Sicilian mafia in 1909, after a long career in New York. Only the first and the last one of the 100 issues were written by Kurt Matull (the author of the German series) having in mind the real Petrosino; the others were only translations of the German original texts, and the covers were the same as in the German edition.

The second example of Sherlock Holmes's clonings too reveals a same dynamics of cross cultural globalisation, which was effective several decades before it would be theorized. In December 1927, the Dutch-Flemish publisher Roman Boek-en- Kunsthandel launched a Dutch translation of an original German series entitled *Harry Dickson de Amerikaansche Sherlock Holmes*. Then in 1928 Belgium publisher Hip Janseens asked writer Jean Ray to translate the Dutch series into French, for distribution in Belgium and France under the title *Harry Dickson le Sherlock Holmes américain*. But Jean Ray quickly became worried by translating the poor original stories and decided to imagine his own stories, in a fantastic mood, using the titles and the covers from the original pre WW1 German edition until 1938, in 178 issues.

The cross cultural soft power of translation in the field of popular fictions is certainly brilliant, but it is enforced when associated with the efficient power of adaptation: it's perhaps particularly striking in the case of transatlantic import/export of popular fictions.

### **2.3 The mixing cultural power of adaptation**

Let us consider the case of the American serials distributed in Europe, well symbolized by the first and the most popular amongst them, *The exploits of Elaine*. In 1914, while the film was released in American theatres, *The Exploits of Elaine* simultaneously appeared on the Sunday editions of Hearst magazines as a serialised novel written by Arthur B. Reeve. However, its 1915 French version entitled *Les mystères de New York* was quite different from the original version, reducing the 36 episodes of Elaine's trilogy (*The Exploits of Elaine*, 1914, and *The Romance of Elaine*, 1915) to a single 22 episode serial. Thanks to new intertitles, the original story was deeply modified: Elaine's partner became a French man involved in the war against Germany. Also the French novelisation was completely new: written by Pierre Decourcelle, it was published as a daily feuilleton on *Le Matin*. Its success gave birth to the so called roman-cinéma, and many other American serials were adapted into feuilletons.

After the First World War, many films made in Hollywood, Berlin or London were on the same way adapted from popular novels or series and shown within a few years in the United States and in several European countries: thus in the mid-1920s *The mark of Zorro* (1920, USA) offered a shared experience in France and Italy (1922), Austria (1925), Germany (1926), Spain, Finland, Greece, according to the notices collected in the International Movie Data Base. Another example is particularly illuminating from my view about the complexity of cross cultural exchanges and mutations of the topics and the figures: it's the case provided by *Orphans of the storm* by D.W. Griffith Productions (1921).

This grand classic of Hollywoodian silent cinema officially describes itself as an adaptation of one of the most celebrated melodramas of the XIXth century, *Les Deux*

Orphelines (1874), co-written by Adolphe d'Ennery and Eugène Cormon, which d'Ennery converted into a tearful instalment-novel in 1892. Yet the title's modification does not result from a simple rhetorical gimmick aimed at the sensational : under the name of Gaston de Tolignac, the director D.W. Griffith doubled as co-screenwriter and shifted the intrigue from the end of the reign of Louis XV and the beginnings of Louis XVI's towards the more tumultuous period ("the Storm") – and indubitably more fascinating in the anglo-saxon imagination – French Revolution period, with the promotional sub-title ("A Story of the French Revolution") suggesting all the exotic and dramatic possibilities. This mutant and grand spectacle version of the Deux Orphelines was quickly shown in Europe since 1922 to 1926, where it circulated jointly with earlier and later European versions closer to the original story.

#### **2.4 Publishers, editors, adaptators and translators as cross cultural go between**

These intercultural transfers and this mixing of representations was a product of the tireless energy of publishers, editors, and translators, often forgotten. Their role as agents of cultural dissemination needs to be re-evaluated. Some popular publishers and important series contributed to the popularity of foreign fiction writers and to their absorption into the local imagination of other nations. Vibrant as these might be, national imaginaries were indeed open to narratives from outside: the "Biblioteca de grandes novellas" from Barcelona resident Ramon Sopena offers a very French list of authors to Spanish readers between 1902 and 1912 including Emile Richebourg, Ponson du Terrail, Eugène Sue, Alexandre Dumas, Xavier de Montépin ... The same names occur twenty years later among the titles carried by the Milanese publisher Sonzogno, featuring also Louis Boussenard, Marcel Allain and Jules Mary alongside the national champions of the adventure novel, Emilio Salgari and Luigi Motta. Translators also played an essential role in this process, some managing to spread genres or individual works more widely, as for example Aurora Rodrigues, who during the 1930s, working for publisher João Romano of Lisbon, translated by dozen sentimental novels by the French Max du Veuzit and Magali but also adventure novels by the french Paul Féval, the irish captain Mayne Reid or the italian Emilio Salgari. Even the cross cultural influence of foreign editions in the primordial language of publication should be appreciated : for instance, the publishing activity of the Bernhard Tauchnitz firm in Leipzig, whose "Collection of British and American authors" proposed from 1841 to 1939 several hundred of works in English to English-speaking travellers in continental Europe and so constituted a first step to a broader and later dissemination of the texts translated in local languages.

I would precisely conclude on the boundless field of research that popular fictions offer to scholars, who have imperatively to join in cooperating networks and to mutualize their collected datas because of the hugeness of this proteiform object. If we are together able to accept this challenge, we should throw the light on popular roots of European culture. Transnational by inclination, transmedial by reason of narrative force and economic necessity, popular fiction from 1840, to 1940 radiated indeed toward a new horizon for the European imagination which in large measure is still our horizon today.